

Darul-Sunnah Article – Tawassul and Waseelah

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Tawassul in Arabic means seeking to draw close. The concept of Tawassul or Waseelah involves using an intermediary as means of Allah accepting your dua or favour. Asking Allah for something (dua) directly without an intermediary is conventional. However, asking through a medium increases the chance of the supplication being accepted and this procedure of Tawassul is affirmed within Quran and Ahadith. This article will hopefully be a means of clarifying the concept of Tawassul/Waseelah In Sha Allah.

The word Tawassul originates from the verbal noun (Waseelah). It is said to literally mean ‘a station with King, a rank or act of devotion’. (This is mentioned in Lisan ul Arab Volume 11 Page 866 by Ibn Manzur [d.711]) The word itself has been stated in the Quran twice (5:35) and (17:57). It is translated as ‘a means that can be used to gain nearness to God.’ This is the typical meaning of the word.

“O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and seek means (Waseelah) of nearness to Him and strive hard in his way so that you may be successful.” (5:35 – Quraan)

The above verse emphasises on four things:

- Faith
- Piety (Taqwa)
- Search for means of approach (Waseelah)
- Struggle for Allah’s Sake

The third regulation given after faith and piety is to seek a means. This highlights the importance of this concept as it is presented between two major core beliefs. Also, the verse says

that you must have faith and taqwa. Thus Waseelah cannot amount to shirk rather it reaffirms the oneness of Allah. Despite it not being an integral part of religion, it is still necessary to defend the notion and refute those who claim for it to be shirk.

Types of Tawassul:

- Through the names and qualities of Allah.

Allah says in the Quraan: “And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on to Him by them, and leave the company of those who deny His names. They will be requited for what they used to do.” [al-Araaf 7:180]

So when a person makes dua, they may invoke Allah through his names such as Ar-Rahman. This is a proven method which has been utilised by many prophets (May Peace and Blessings Be upon Them All) when they made supplication.

Through righteous deeds

- Such as Salah, Fasting, Obedience towards parents, Charity, Dhikr, Recitation of Quraan, Avoiding Haram things and so on. An example of this has been narrated in Saheeh Bukhari and Saheeh Muslim of an incident in which three people were stuck in a cave due to a rock falling and blocking the exit. They asked Allah by the virtue of their good deeds (to save them). Someone may also express their grief as a way of increasing the chance of their dua being accepted. All these methods are proven concepts through Quraan and Ahadith. Nobody disputes this type of Tawassul.

Through the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace)

- Tirmidhi relates through his chain of narrators from Uthman ibn Hunayf, that a blind man came to the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and said, “I’ve been afflicted in my eyesight, so pray to Allah for me.” The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said: “Go make whudhu, perform two rakaahs of prayer and then say:
‘O Allah! I ask You and turn to you through my prophet Muhammad, I seek your intercession with my lord for the return of my eyesight (for my need so that it may be fulfilled)’
The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) then added: “If there is a need then do the same.”

This hadith has been accepted as Saheeh by Imam Ibn Khuzaymah, Imam Hakim and Tirmidhi. The words ‘I turn to you through your prophet’ clearly initiate Tawassul and the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) instructs us to do the same. (Al-Raddul Muhkamul mateen Page 145)

The scholars of Sacred Law have inferred from this hadith that doing tawassul through the prophet is permissible. However, Salafis like to disregard this Hadith with excuses such as saying that doing Tawassul is no longer valid as the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) passed away. The ruling regarding this blatant claim is that Tawassul would be more effective now as the status of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) increases more and more towards the Day of Judgement due to the continuous practise of his teachings taking place daily by his followers. The more people act upon

his teachings, the more reward he attains thus increasing his status. As well as this, the belief of Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah is that the prophet is alive in his grave as proven by the mutawatir Ahadith as well as the consensus of the Salaf (pious predecessors).

Moreover, Tabarani in his 'al-Mu'jam al saghir' reports a hadith from Uthman ibn Hunayf that a man repeatedly visited Hadhrat Uthman (Allah be pleased with him) concerning something that he needed, but Uthman paid no attention to him or his need. The man met Ibn Hunaf and later complained to him about the matter – this being after the wisal (passing away) of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and after the Caliphates of Abu Bakr and Umar – so Uthman Ibn Hunayf (who was one of the Companions who collected Ahadith and learned in religion) said: "Go to the place of ablution and perform whudhu, then come to the masjid and perform two rakaahs and prayer therein and say:

'O Allah! I ask you and turn to you through our Prophet Muhammad, I turn through you to my lord that you may fulfil my need.' And mention your need. Then come so that I can go with you to Hadhrat Uthman." So the man left and did as he was told, then went to the door of Uthman ibn Affan (Allah be pleased with him) and the doorman came and took him by the hand to Uthman ibn Affan and seated to him on a cushion. Uthman asked – "What do you need?" and the man mentioned what he wanted so Uthman accomplished that for him. Then he said – 'I forgot you needed that until now; whenever you need something, just mention it. Then, the man departed and met Uthman Ibn Hunayf and said to him "May Allah reward you! He didn't come to see my need until you spoke with him". Uthman Ibn Hunayf replied – 'By Allah! I did not speak to him, but I have seen a blind man coming to the prophet (Allah bless him and

give him peace) and complain about his eyesight. The prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said to him – “Can you not bear it?”. The man replied, ‘O messenger! I do not have anyone to lead me around and it is a great hardship upon me.’ The prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) told him, ‘Go make ablution and pray two rakaahs and make the dua.’ Ibn Hunayf went on, “By Allah, we didn’t part company or speak long before the man returned to us as if nothing had ever been wrong with him.”

This is an explicit, unequivocal text from a prophetic companion proving the legal validity of tawassul through the righteous even if they may be dead. The account has been classified as saheeh (authentic) by many scholars who have rigorously authenticated it such as Baihaqi, Mundhiri and Haythami and Ibn Taymiyyah.

Another example to prove this idea is the incident related by Imam Bukhari and others. (Sahih Bukhari Page 245 Hadith Number 1010) The companion Umar (May Allah be pleased with him) made Tawassul through the Uncle of the Messenger of Allah (Allah bless him and give him peace), Sayyiduna Abbas in asking Allah for rain at the time of drought. In this text, the word used in describing the tawassul is a continuous past tense verb which proves that making tawassul through the prophet after his wisal was done by the Sahaba. The same should apply to us. The hadith has been affirmed by Ibn Khuzaymah, Ibn Hibaan, Imam Tabrani and Imam Baihaqi. Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani also accepts the tawassul in this hadith in his book (Fathul Bari – Page 557).

Imam Hakim has mentioned in his mustadrak that Hadhrat Umar addressed the people – “O people, verily the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) would hold Hadhrat

Abbas in a very high esteem as a son would his father, so follow the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) in his relationship towards his uncle and make him a means to Allah in whatever befalls you.’ (Volume 3 Page 334)

Sayyidiuna Anas ibn Malik narrates that the Hadhrat Fatima passed away and Hadhrat Ali made the following dua before burying her: “O Allah, The One who gives life and death and Who is living and will never die, forgive my mother Fatima and make her arguments known to her (make the questions in the grave easy to answer). Make her grave spacious for her. I ask you through the right of your prophet and all the prophets before me, for verily you are the most merciful.’ (al- Mujamaul awsat Volume 1 Page 152; Hilya Volume 3 Page 121) It is classed as Saheeh by Ibn Hibaan and Hakim (raful manarah page 147). Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Haythami classed it as hasan (fair).

Sayyiduna Malik Al-Dar (the treasurer of food) during the time of Sayyiduna Umar ibn Khattab narrates that once there was a drought so a man went to the grave of the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and said:

‘O Rasulullah! Ask for rain on behalf of your Ummah, for verily, they are being destroyed.’ Thereafter this person was instructed in a dream to go to Sayyiduna Umar and tell him that ‘the rain will soon come and say to him – “Be intelligent”.’ When Umar was informed regarding this he began to cry and said ‘O my lord, I will only leave out what I am unable to do.’ Musanaf Ibn Abi Shaybah Volume 12 Page 31-32 Dalaailun Nubbuwah by Imam Baihaqi Volume 7 Page 47) Ibn Katheer has said its sanad is strong in Musnad al Farooq Volume 1 Page 223. Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani has also affirmed its authenticity in Fathul Bari.

Imam Hakim and others have narrated on the account of Hadhrat Umar that the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, 'When Adam ate from the tree he said, 'O My lord, I ask you through the right of Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) that you forgive me.' Allah then accepted his repentance. Al Mustadarak Volume 2 Page 615, Dalailun Nubuwwah of Imam Bayhaqi Volume 5 page 489 and al Mujamus Saghir of Imam Tabrani Volume 2 Page 82.

This Hadith has been strongly authenticated by many scholars and this proves tawassul. The Waseelah was done before the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) was born so why can't we do it after he passes away.

As it is reported by Amr ibn Shuayb by Imam Nasai in his Sunan 6:262 that his grandfather had said: "Through the means of the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), we seek help for our women and children from believers." – the narrator has said that they repeated these words as instructed by the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace).

It is worthy to note that even the Jews made tawassul of the prophet to come (Prophet Muhammad - Allah bless him and give him peace) in order to defeat their enemy during war. This is mentioned in the Quraan in Surah Baqarah Verse 89. This is discussed in tafseer al-jalalain.

Allamah Alusi has said in the tafseer of this verse in Ruhul-Ma'ani that "This Ayah was revealed regarding Banu Quraizah and Banu Nazeer, who used to ask Allah for victory against Aus and Khazraj by means of the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) and this was done before he came to this earth. They used to say 'Oh Allah, we beseech you by the rights of that Prophet of yours whom you have promised to send us towards the end of time, that you give us victory over our

enemies today.' This has been narrated also by Tafseer-e-kashaf and khazin."

This incident is also mentioned in Tafsir Uthmani, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Fathul Qadeer Shawkani. Ibn Qayum al Jawzi.

How is it possible for salafis to classify this notion as Shirk despite it being carried out by a Sahabi. As well as this, nobody from the Salaf disagreed with the concept. Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah even retracted his statements regarding Tawassul being Shirk [He accepted it to be valid] after a debate with the great Maliki scholar Ibn Ata Allah al-Iskandari. This confrontation allowed him to understand the truth and reality regarding this concept. Those people who still claim it to be monotheism after substantial proof are purely ignorant. (see Musnad.com for the dialogue and references).

Through a pious and righteous individual

Every person with a sound mind will determine that there is no reason to differentiate between the living and the dead. This is the reason why scholars from the Salaf (who the salafis claim to follow) such as Imam Subki, Hafidh Ibn Kathir, Imam an-Nawawi (Allah have mercy upon them all) and many others have declared the permissibility of tawassul through the righteous, whether they are alive or passed away due to the mercy of Allah.

As proven above, Tawassul through the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) is valid due to the substantial proofs provided. The salaf also agreed that tawassul of righteous individuals was also permitted as proven below. The very same people who claim to follow the salaf inadvertently claim they have committed shirk. The reason for this is because they believe that Tawassul of this kind is shirk so how do

they explain the actions of the pious and righteous predecessors?

- Imam Hasan ibn Ibrahim al Hallal has stated that whenever he had an urgent issue, he would go and visit the grave of Imam Moosa ibn Jafar and make Tawassul through him. Allah would then fulfil his need. (Taarikh Baghdad)
- Imam Shafiee would make Tawassul at the grave of Imam Abu Hanifa. (Taarikh Baghdad – 1:123). Allamah al-Kawthari has classified this incident as saheeh. (maqaalatul kawthari Page 381). Imam Shafi states: 'I derive blessings from the person of Imam Abu Hanifah and I visit his grave everyday. When I face a problem, I offer two optional cycles of prayer and visit his grave and I pray to Allah to solve my problem. And I have not even left the place that my problem is solved. (Ibn Abidin SHami in Raddul muhtar (1:41)
- Allamah Tajudeen Al-Subki has mentioned that the people would go to the grave of Imam Ibn Farook (the teacher of Imam Baihaqi) and make tawassul through him in a dua. His dua would later be accepted. He has also written in Al-Shifa As Siqam (page 377) that it is permissible to take tawassul of all righteous people, infact no muslim ever rejected this apart from those who were from the innovators of religion.
- Imam Dhahabi narrates in As Siyar Al-Alam an Nabula Volume 12 Page 469 that once there was a drought in Samarqand. The people tried their best and prayed Salatul Istisqa but it did not rain. The Qadhi suggested that everyone does tawassul of Imam Bukhari (whose grave was in Khartank – a nearby town). The people

started to make Waseelah and immediately Allah sent rainclouds.

- Hafiz al-Zarkashi has made tawassul in the introduction to his commentary on Sahih Al-Bukhari entitled 'Al-Tanqeeh'.
- Hafiz Taqi ud deen Al-Subki (the father of Tajudeen al-Subki) has approved this form of Tawassul and he has written a detailed treatise on this topic. (see Shifa-u-Siqam pages 293-318)
- Allamah Nawawi has mentioned that from among the etiquettes of visiting the grave of Rasulullah (Allah bless him and give him peace) is that one should make Tawassul. Thereafter, he states that '....and one of the best thing that one should do is what had been related by Allamah Al-Mardawi and Al-Qadhi Abu Teeb and all our Ulema and they have regarded it as commendable, and that is the incident of Imam al-Utabi that he said, 'I was once seated by the grave of Rasulullah (Allah bless him and give him peace) when a Bedouin came and said, 'Peace be upon you O messenger, I have heard Almighty Allah say in the Quraan "And if they, when they had been unjust to themselves, had come to you (the prophet) and begged Allah's forgiveness and the messenger had begged forgiveness for them, indeed they would have found Allah All-forgiving. Most Merciful. (Surah Nisa Verse 64). Hence, I have come to you in a state of asking forgiveness by seeking your intervention by my Lord.' Thereafter, he recited a few couplets and departed. Imam al Utabi states, 'I then fell asleep and I saw Rasullulah (Allah bless him and give him peace) instructing me by these words, 'O Utabi, go to that Bedouin and give him the glad tidings that Allah has forgiven him.' (Refer to Al Majmoo Volume 8 Page 456 and Manaasikul Imam Al-

Nawawi Page 498-499. This incident had been related by scholars such as Hafiz Ibn Katheer in his tafseer and Allamah Ibn Qudamah in his Al-Mughni Volume 3 Page 556 and Imam Abul-Faraj in his Al-Sharhul Kabeer Volume 3 Page 495 etc.)

- Imam Dhahabi, Ibn Majah, Imam Nasai and Imam Ghazali and a countless number of scholars have affirmed the concept of Tawassul in their respected overviews of the hadiths regarding Waseelah.
- Imam Malik once was asked by the caliph on the best method of making dua. Imam Malik replied: “O caliph, why do you turn your face from the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) as he is the source of mediation for you and for your ancestor Adam on the day of judgement. Rather turn towards him and seek his intercession so that he intercedes for you on the day of judgement.” – (Qadi Iyad in Shifa 2:596 with a sound chain of transmission).
- Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah accepts Tawassul when discussing an incident of Abdul Malik and his stomach ulcer in. In this incident, he made Waseelah of the prophet after his passing. (Qaida Al-Jaleela Page 91).
- Imam Qurtubi narrates that Hadhrat Ali came to the grave of Rasulullah (Allah bless him and give him peace) three days after he passed away. He said ‘Ya Rasulullah (Allah bless him and give him peace), you spoke and we heard. We learnt from you. I am a sinner so ask for me.’ – A voice came saying you are forgiven. This incident highlights tawassul and the effect it had. (Tafseer Qurtubi)
- Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has also encouraged making Tawassul in ones duas. (Fatawa Ibn Taymiyya Volume 1 Page 140 and Mafaaheem Page 137).

Al Mardawi said: “The correct position of the (Hanbali) Madhab is that it is permissible in one’s dua to use as ones means a pious person (saalih), and it is said that this is desirable and recommended (mustahab). Imam Ahmad said to Abu Bakr al-Marzawi: ‘Let him use the Prophet as a means in his supplication to Allah.’ (Al-Insaf 2:456) This is also cited by Ibn Taymiyyah in hid Majmu-Al-Fatawa Volume 1 Page 140.

- Hafiz Shamsudeen Al-Sakhawi (the grand student of Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani made Tawassul many times through Rasulullah (Allah bless him and give him peace) in his books. (see Tuhfatul Lateefah Volume 1 Page 3 and 17)
- Albani (a salafi scholar) even admits in his book Al-Tawwasul [38] that the Imams (such as Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal and Imam Shawkani) have permitted Tawassul. Despite accepting this claim, nevertheless he still promotes the fact that this notion is Shirk. Indirectly, he may be accusing these great scholars of committing Shirk.
- Imam Shawkani Al-Salafi (a ghair muqalid scholar referred to by many salafis) has also permitted Tawassul. (Tuhfatul Zakireen Page 50) He has written in Tuhfatul Zakireen: “And in this hadith is proof for the permissibility of Tawassul through the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) to Allah. With the conviction that the actual doer is Allah and that he is the Giver and Withholder. What he wills, is – and what he doesn’t will, will never be.”
- Imam Nawawi states that one should face the grave of Rasulullah (Allah bless him and give him peace) and make him an intermediary and intercede through him to Allah. (Majmu Sharh Al-Madhab – Kitaab al Hajj.
- Ibn Hajar (Tahdhib 7:339) narrates the account of Imam of Ahlul_hadith Ibn Khuzaymah, under the entry of Ali bin

Musa al-Ridha. He relates that Ibn Khuzayma also performed tawassul at the grave of Al-Ridha.

- In his Rijal book Al-Thuqat (8:456) under the entry of Ali bin Musa al Ridha, Ibn Hibaan relates his own account of going to Al-ridhas grave, performing tawassul through him and states that “Whenever I was afflicted with a problem during my stay in Tus, I would visit Ali bin Musa’s grave and ask Allah to relieve me of that problem and it (my dua) would be answered and the problem alleviated. And this is something I did, and found to work, many times....”

The list of Ulama continues (see Maqalatul Kawthari Page 378-397). All of these esteemed scholars practised Tawassul and permitted it. After contemplating all the evidences provided, anyone with a sound mind would not deny the permissibility of Tawassul. Abu Abdullah Al-Timisani Al-Maliki has written a book concerning how Tawassul has remained the practise of the entire Ummah since its existence. (See Maqalatul Kawthari Page 397).

Anyone doing Tawassul is merely using a honourable personality in order to ask Allah (only) to fulfil his need without thinking the individual is being supplicated to or that he will fulfil his need. Allah is the sole helper and provider. Nobody denies the fact that Allah is the only one that can give aid and help. All good comes from Him and He is powerful over everyone and everything. Tawassul is merely a method of using an intermediary to make the supplication be at a higher chance of getting accepted. In no way, shape or form does it entail shirk. However, if one asks directly from the deceased and believes that the Anbiya (Allah bless them and give them peace) possess the power to provide then this would be Shirk because he is now ascribing partners to Allah in the quality of providing. The analogy is given that Allah provides cure from health, but

using penicillin is the intermediary in order to get that cure from Allah. Indeed there is no cure but from Allah. The same analogy applies with Tawassul – the aid comes from Allah and the intermediary used in the dua can be a pious and righteous individual.

Asking from the deceased is totally prohibited. However asking Allah through the medium of a honourable personality is permitted and people need to understand this delicate issue as it is the practise of the Sahabas and the pious predecessors. Furthermore, all four schools of thought within fiqh allow and permit Tawassul through the deceased pious individuals as well as the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace). Shaykh Ashraf Ali Thanwi has written in Imdad al-Fatawa (4:372) that – “Indeed Tawassul through those accepted by Allah in dua, whether they are alive or dead is permissible. The tawassul of Umar through Abbas in seeking rain has been established as so has the tawassul through the messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace) and the blind man after the death of the prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace). Therefore there is no doubt regarding the permissibility. Yes, when extremism in this matter becomes apparent in the laity of the people, and they were prohibited for that reason, the prohibition in this case is also correct.”

Summary of points

1. It is permissible to make Tawassul through the Ambiya, the pious, Sideeqeen, martyrs and mutaqeen. It is permissible to make dua through them as a Waseelah. (Raad al Muhtaar Volume 5 Page 350, Ruhul Ma’ani Volume 6 Page 128).
2. Tawassul is permitted whilst the pious are alive as well as after they pass away. (Fathul Bari Volume 1 Page 151,

Bariqah Mahmudiyyah Volume 1 Page 270, Tusheen as Sudoor Page 435, Al-Muhammad Alal Mufannad Page 12 and 13)

3. The method of Tawassul is that a person should make dua – ‘O Allah, I wish acceptance of my dua through the Waseelah of a particular pious individual and I desire that my need shall be fulfilled.’ Or in the words similar to these as mentioned in Bukhari Volume 1 Page 137, Tirmidhi Volume 2 Page 197 and in Hujjatullahi al Baaligha Volume 2 Page 6.
4. Instead of Waseelah, if a person directly asks a righteous person to fulfil his needs or to remove his difficulties, then this is Shirk. (Mishkaat Volume 2 Page 453, Majma Bishar Al-Anwaar and Hujjatullahi al-Baaligha Volume 1 Page 122.
5. It is permissible to make Waseelah through the being and qualities of Allah, through good deeds like Salaah, fasting, obedience to one’s parents and so on. This is mentioned in Bukhari Volume 2 Page 883, Muslim Volume 2 Page 553, Sharah Nawawi on Muslim Volume 2 Page 353, Fatawa Ibn Taymiyyah Volume 27 Page 133.
6. It is recommended to make Waseelah through the names and attributes of Allah as done by the prophets and as stated in the Quran.
7. Just as it is permissible to make Waseelah through good deeds, similarly, it is permissible to do the same through the pious and chosen servants of Allah. THIS IS BECAUSE WASEELAH THROUGH A PERSON IS WASEELAH THROUGH DEEDS IN REALITY. This is mentioned in Shifa us Siqaam Page 129 from Tasheen us Sudoor Page 405, See Ziyaartul Qubbor Page 118, Anfaas e Isa Page 41.

8. Making Waseelah through the pious people is actually because of the love you have for them in the heart. So if Waseelah can be done through an action which is carried out by the apparent parts of the body, then why can't it be done using an action which is done by the heart and that is the love of the saaliheen.